Belmont Shore chalk art contest brings artists and community together

The annual chalk art contest gives artists space to create, connect and rediscover the joy of making art.



Participating contestants line up Oct. 24 to showcase their artwork for the day as judges review and announce their winners. Photo credit: Jackie Pena Cruz

By: Jackie Pena Cruz

For a few hours, the sidewalks of Belmont Shore became more than paths between shops and restaurants. With $1000 in cash prizes and free admission, locals gathered between Laverne and Granada avenues doing chalk art.

The 22nd annual Belmont Shore Sidewalk Chalk Art Contest took place Saturday, Oct. 24 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. along Second Street. The event was organized by Justin Rudd and his nonprofit Community Action Team.

Having seven hours to complete their work, artists of all ages filled Second Street with colorful drawings, giving passersby a chance to watch each piece take shape while meeting its creator.

For emerging artists, an event offered something difficult to find: a public platform. Instead of waiting for a gallery show or online following, artists shared their work with neighbors, visitors and fellow creators.

“I used to be a tattoo apprentice, so drawing Betty Boop helps me feel like I’m still in that industry,” 33-year-old Long Beach-based artist Kim Deveau said. “I truly love it.”

Chalk brings back the freedom of childhood: choosing a color, filling the pavement and letting one idea lead to another. At the contest, artists of every age bend over the sidewalk, turning those playful instincts into careful, vivid scenes. For some, that joy lasts long after childhood.

“I fell in love with doing chalk art on the sidewalk outdoors,” 69-year-old Culver City-based street artist and contestant Lori Escalera said. “It took me a couple of years to find out that I love to reproduce master artwork, and for 32 years I’ve been doing what I love.”



Lori Escalera (69) drew a portrait of deceased artist Dolly Parton to pay homage for the impact she had on her life. With careful strokes, she added her finishing touches. Photo credit: Jackie Pena Cruz

Working with it on a sidewalk can bring back the freedom of drawing, early childhood memories – the feeling that the result doesn’t have to be perfect to be beautiful.

“I started this as a publicity stunt for a dog parade I was hosting 22 years ago, and from then on it became tradition,” said 57-year-old Justin Rudd, organizer of the Belmont Shore Sidewalk Chart Art Contest. No theme, just creating whatever is in their heart.”

Visitors slow down as artists press chalk to pavement, blending colors and building each image one careful stroke at a time. A child points out a bright detail; a passerby asks how the artist made a shadow look so lifelike.

These small conversations give the drawings meaning beyond the pavement: artists share work they love, and neighbors become part of the moment it comes to life.

For artists, the contest offered more than a place to draw: It gave them a chance to test their skills, see how their work stood beside others, and earn recognition from the community.



Artists are seen taking small breaks, enjoying the late afternoon breeze as they await to line up for the announcements. Photo credit: Jackie Pena Cruz

As the seven-hour deadline approached, artists lined up with their artworks in hand, ready for judges to announce the winners.

The contest named Jennifer Ripessa its highest winner for "*Best in Show*," recognizing the creativity and skill behind her beautiful chalk artwork, "*Please?*." A portrait of a small girl extending her arm outwards towards the audience.

At the end of the day, artists were allowed to take their finished drawings with them or sell them to spectators..

For one day, the contest reminds Long Beach that art can bring a community together through the simple joy of creating.

"I am inspired by life and love. I am inspired by the thought that my work might create deep emotion; happiness, even sadness," Ripessa said. "I want my work to make a lasting impression."